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Military treaty holds surveillance key

US-Turkish talks put monitoring sites in jeopardy

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Washington

The United States could face loss of its remaining key monitoring sites along the Soviet Union's southern borders unless a satisfactory new US-Turkish military agreement is concluded this summer.

Loss of US electronic intelligence stations in Iran, after the Shah's departure from power, has heightened the importance of at least four US sites in Turkey, especially for verification of the expected new US-Soviet SALT II arms-limitation agreement.

However, say both US and Turkish sources, US-Turkish talks on a new military treaty, which would extend the present one-year provisional operation of the sites beyond its expiration next Oct. 9, have run into rough waters.

Value of sites disputed

Spokesmen for various branches of the Carter administration, including the State Department, Pentagon, and Central Intelligence Agency, often differ sharply – when they will comment at all – about the value of both the lost Iranian sites and the endangered Turkish ones in US intelligence-gathering.

All concede, however, that the Turkish sites were crucial in observing an April 19 Soviet test launching of a SS-18 intercontinental missile from Tyuratam, in the southwestern USSR, to a target point in the Kamchatka Peninsula in Siberia, and in many similar tests before that.

Arms-embargo hitch recalled

After launch of the SS-18, which could have carried up to 14 nuclear warheads, four more than the impending SALT II reportedly would allow, the missile was tracked and its warheads were counted by satellites and by such radar sets as those located on Shemya Island, Alaska. However, US officials acknowledge privately that the Turkish sites, in the absence of the Iranian ones, are critically important in watching the early stages of such Soviet tests.

The four US sites in Turkey most critical in SALT verification and other intelligence-collecting processes were reopened provisionally for one year last October after the US Congress lifted the arms embargo it had imposed following Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus. The sites are Sinop, on the Black Sea coast of northcentral Turkey; Karamursel, on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Marmara; Belbasi, near Ankara in central Turkey; and Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey north of the Syrian border.

A new draft agreement initialed by the US and Turkey on March 26, 1976, would have placed these and other important US installations in Turkey, such as the big Incirlik Air Base near Adana in southern Turkey, under Turkish military command. That accord could not be completed, mainly because of difficulties created by the arms embargo. Last January talks began on a completely new agreement.

"We feel," said Turkish opposition Justice Party Sen. Kamran Inan at a briefing for newsmen here, "that our situation as your NATO ally and good friend should be put in some concrete, codified form."

Comprehensive pact sought

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's government, beset by inflation, unemployment, international debts, terrorism, and political and social unrest among the Kurds and other ethnic-religious groups, wants a comprehensive treaty with the US.

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Straightforward military clauses allowing operation of the bases would be laced around with supplemental agreements. They would cover US economic aid, US-Turkish cooperation in setting up new Turkish defense industries, a continuing flow of US "defense support" including hardware, training, and spare parts, and, finally, the military installations themselves.

Greek Cypriot interests

"You Americans," said Metin Toker, an independent Turkish senator traveling with Mr. Inan, "are most interested in your bases. We Turks are most interested in improving the condition of our economy and our armed forces, which suffered severely from the embargo. Somewhere there must be a meeting of minds."

US congressmen recently met with Greek Cypriot emissaries who wanted new US aid to Turkey made conditional on more Turkish flexibility in the stalled Cyprus talks. However, supporters of the Greek Cypriots were not successful in attaching strings to an additional $150 million, including $50 million in outright grant military aid, which President Carter asked for in emergency economic and military aid for Turkey.

A total package of $300 million is nearing final action in Congress. In 1978 Turkey received $225 million in direct US financial support, $175 million of which was in military aid.

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